

NEEDS ANALYSIS OF GRADE 7 EFL SPEAKING: WANTS AND CURRICULUM NECESSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the EFL speaking needs of Grade 7 students at SMPN 3 Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia, using Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) tripartite needs analysis framework. A mixed-method design was employed, combining a 25-items Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 31 students with a semi-structured interview conducted with their English teacher. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure. The findings revealed that curricular necessities under Kurikulum Merdeka prioritized communicative fluency and meaning-focused oral production. The most critical lack was students' inability to speak without script (M = 2,47), compounded by performance anxiety related to fear of making mistakes (M = 3,43). Students' highest-ranked instructional wants were teacher modeling (M = 4,13) and game-based activities (M = 4,03), both of which aligned positively with identified curricular necessities. These findings suggest that students' wants functions as targeted responses to specific lacks, serving as a conceptual bridge towards meeting curricular necessities. Findings are expected to inform a speaking syllabus design that is curriculum-complaint, learner-responsive, and culturally grounded.

Keywords: *EFL speaking, Junior High School, Kurikulum Merdeka, Needs Analysis, Tripartite Framework*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji kebutuhan berbicara Bahasa Inggris (EFL) siswa kelas VII di SMPN 3 Bukittinggi, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia, dengan menggunakan kerangka analisis kebutuhan tripartit dari Hutchinson dan Waters (1987). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain metode campuran, yang menggabung kuesioner skala Likert berisi 25 item yang diberikan kepada 31 siswa dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur yang dilakukan bersama guru Bahasa Inggris mereka. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis secara tematik mengikuti prosedur enam fase Braun dan Clarke (2006). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebutuhan kurikuler (necessities) dalam Kurikulum Merdeka mengutamakan kefasihan komunikatif dan produksi lisan yang berfokus pada makna. Kekurangan (lack) paling kritis yang ditemukan adalah ketidakmampuan siswa berbicara tanpa teks ($M=2,47$), yang diperparah oleh kecemasan performa akibat ketakutan membuat kesalahan ($M=3,43$). Keinginan (wants) instruksional siswa yang memperoleh peringkat tertinggi adalah pemodelan oleh guru ($M=4,13$) dan aktivitas berbasis permainan ($M=4,03$), yang keduanya selaras secara positif dengan kebutuhan kurikuler yang telah teridentifikasi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa keinginan siswa berfungsi sebagai respons yang ditargetkan terhadap kekurangan tertentu, sekaligus menjadi jembatan konseptual menuju pemenuhan kebutuhan kurikuler. Temuan penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi masukan bagi perancangan silabus berbicara yang sesuai dengan kurikulum, responsif terhadap kebutuhan pembelajaran, dan berakar pada budaya setempat.

Kata Kunci: Berbicara Bahasa Inggris, Sekolah Menengah Pertama, Kurikulum Merdeka, Analisis Kebutuhan, Kerangka Tripartit

A. Introduction

Speaking is widely acknowledged as the most challenging yet essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Thornbury (2005) defines speaking as a skill involving

simultaneous, real time processing of meaning, grammar, and pronunciation, while Brown (2001) identifies anxiety as the primary affective barrier to oral production. More recent scholarship corroborates this view: Syahbani and

Apoko (2023) found a significant negative correlation between learning anxiety and speaking performance among lower secondary school students in Indonesia, confirming that affective variables remain a persistent obstacle to oral development. Bygate's (1987) foundational distinction between knowledge and skill further underscore that speaking competence cannot be reduced to grammatical knowledge alone but requires the ability to develop language under real-time communicative pressure. Hymes' (1972) seminal notion of communicative competence, later elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980) into grammatical, sociolinguistic accuracy, discourse, and strategic competence, reinforces that speaking instruction must address more than linguistic accuracy. It must also cultivate learners' capacity to use appropriately and strategically across social contexts.

In EFL context, a common speaking paradox persists: students are highly motivated to speak English, and curricula instruct speaking competence, yet a significant gap remains in practice. This

paradox is partly explained by MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) construct of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), which posits that motivation alone does not guarantee actual language use. Situational, psychological and affective factors mediate whether a learner chooses to speak even when capable of doing so. Lee and Chui (2023), in a study with Korean EFL students, confirmed that communication anxiety - both face-to-face and digital - significantly predicts WTC, demonstrating that this mediating dynamic operates across diverse learning contexts. The present study explores whether existing curricula truly respond to both the necessities and the wants of learners, or whether they merely assume motivation will translate into oral engagement.

In Indonesia, English functions as a foreign language, with limited opportunities for authentic exposure and use beyond the classroom. Consequently, the classroom becomes the primary - often sole - setting for speaking practice. Grade 7 represents a critical transition stage, as many

students encounter formal, English instruction for the first time. To be able to understand students' needs at this stage is vital before finalizing curricula. It is particularly given that early negative experiences with speaking tasks can entrench long-term reticence. Krashen's (1982) Effective Filter Hypothesis offers a complementary theoretical lens, positing that heightened anxiety raises an internal "filter" that impedes language acquisition regardless of instructional quality. This is especially relevant in the context of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbudristek, 2022), which repositions learners as active agent and emphasizes communicative competence, project-based learning, and differentiated instruction across all school levels including junior secondary. Latifa et al. (2023) note that while Kurikulum Merdeka creates new opportunities for communicative EFL teaching, teachers face considerable challenges in translating its learner-centered mandates into effective speaking instruction - a gap that makes

systematic needs analysis all the more urgent.

Historically, speaking curricula have been designed top-down, frequently ignoring the "learner voice". Tyler (1949) argued that curriculum objectives must originate from studies of learners themselves, a position echoed by Long (2005), who frames needs analysis as an interactive, evidence-based process rather than a one-time administrative step preceding syllabus design. Long (2021) reaffirmed this position, emphasizing multi-source triangulation - involving learners, teachers, and curriculum documents - as essential for valid and reliable identification. To connect the misalignment between necessities, wants, and lacks, the present study adopts Hutchinson and Waters (1987) tripartite framework, which as Songhori (2008) notes, remains one of the most widely applied models for reconciling institutional demands with learner-perceived needs in language program design. According to this framework, necessities refer to what learners must know to function in the

target situation, lacks identify gaps between current proficiency and those necessities, and wants represent learners' subjective perceptions of their own needs. A recent review by Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2023) confirms that necessities - lacks - wants triad continues to provide a robust conceptual scaffold for needs analysis studies in EFL contexts, particularly at second and higher education levels.

Although a substantial body of research has examined speaking needs, and challenges in EFL settings. Relatively few studies have integrated learner wants, curriculum necessities and speaking lacks within a single analytical framework at the junior high school level in Indonesia. Puspita and Rosnaningsih (2019) examined speaking skill needs at the primary school level, while Bela and Albert (2021) investigated teaching materials and curriculum alignment at the SMP level without specifically focusing on speaking. Afriadi (2021) explored classroom interaction as a site of learner language use, and Tealumbanua et al. (2022) discussed curriculum policy in

relation to learner-centered education at the secondary level. None of these studies, however, directly investigated how learners wants align with curriculum necessities in speaking instruction within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, nor do they examine Grade 7 students' speaking lacks through a tripartite needs analysis lens. Furthermore, existing studies rarely triangulate students self-reports, teacher perspectives, and curriculum document analysis simultaneously - a methodological gap this study addresses.

This study contributes to the growing body of needs analysis research in Indonesia in three distinctive ways. First, it applies Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) tripartities framework to a Grade 7 EFL speaking context under Kurikulum Merdeka. Second, it triangulated three data sources - student questionnaire, teacher interview, and curriculum document analysis (Capaian Pembelajaran Fase D) - within a single study, enhancing both validity and practicality applicability. Third, it situated the analysis within SMPN 3 Bukittinggi in

West Sumatra which underscores the importance of purposeful, respectful, and value-laden communication. Findings are expected to inform a speaking syllabus design that is simultaneously curriculum-complaint, learner-responsive, and culturally grounded, contributing to a more equitable and effective EFL speaking pedagogy at the junior school in Indonesia.

To address the identified gaps and guide this initiation, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the curricular necessities embedded in the EFL speaking curriculum for Grade 7 under Kurikulum Merdeka, as identified through the Hutchinson and Waters (1987) needs analysis framework?
2. What are the speaking lacks and affective barriers experienced by Grade 7 EFL students at SMPN 3 Bukittinggi?
3. What instruction wants do Grade 7 students express with regard to EFL speaking activities, and how do these wants align with the

necessities prescribed by the curriculum?

B. Method

This study employed a mixed-method design to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data on Grade 7 EFL students' speaking needs. The mixed-method approach was chosen to allow the numerical insights drawn from the teacher's perspective. The integration of these methods aligns with the pragmatist paradigm. Prioritizing the most effective tools to answer the research questions.

The participants of this study were Grade 7 students at SMPN 3 Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, aged 12 to 13 years. They presented a heterogeneous range of English proficiency levels typical of public junior high school classrooms in Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling on the basis that they were enrolled in an EFL speaking course under the Kurikulum Merdeka framework. In addition to the students, their English teacher was included as a key informant to provide an instructional perspective

that complemented the students self-report data.

Quantitative data were collected through a 25 item Likert-scale questionnaire administered to all 31 students. The questionnaire was organized into four domains: Problems, Priorities, Abilities, and Solutions. These domains operationalized Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) tripartite needs analysis framework, in which priorities corresponded to learners' wants, while problems supplied complementary diagnostic information on affective and linguistic barriers. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for each item and domain. Items with mean scores of 3,50 and above were categorized as high-priority needs, while items scoring below 3,49 were interpreted as significant lacks or affective barriers.

Qualitative data were obtained through a semi-structured interview conducted with the English teacher, using a protocol of

open-ended questions designed to elicit reflections on students' speaking performance, instructional challenges, and perceived curricular fit. The interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and subsequently translated and transcribed for analysis. The data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis procedure: familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

The two data sources were subsequently triangulated to construct a comprehensive picture of students' necessities, lacks, and wants in EFL speaking instruction. Ethical standards, including informed consent and anonymity, were strictly maintained throughout the study.

C. Result

RQ 1: Curricular Necessities for Grade 7 EFL Speaking

The Priorities domain (Q6 - Q10) revealed that students rated speaking competency items at moderate to very

high levels. The highest mean score was recorded to communicative fluency (Q6, $M = 4,00$, $SD = 1,23$), followed by academic speaking and presentations (Q9, $M = 4,00$, $SD = 1,06$), self-introduction competence (Q7, $M = 4,16$, $SD = 1,19$), and peer interaction (Q8, $M = 3,77$, $SD = 0,96$). The perceived value of speaking over other skills received the lowest score in this domain (Q10, $M = 3,06$, $SD = 1,30$). These results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean Score for Speaking Priorities (Curricular Necessities)

Item	Indicator
Q6	Communicative fluency
Q7	Self-introduction competence
Q8	Peer interaction
Q9	Academic speaking / presentation
Q10	Value of speaking vs. other skills

The teacher's interview confirmed that communicative fluency descriptive ability and basic grammatical awareness were the primary speaking competencies expected of Grade 7 students under the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) for English at Fase D, Kurikulum Merdeka.

RQ 2: Speaking Lacks and Affective Barriers

Speaking lacks and affective barriers were identified through two domains of students questionnaire: the Problem domain (Q1 - Q5) and the Abilities domain (Q11 - Q15). Two items from the Attitude domain (Q17 and Q19) were also included as they directly relate to effective dimensions of speaking performance - confidence and shyness - that are integral to understanding students' productive capacity. Table 2 and 3 present the mean scores and

categories for each relevant item.

Table 2. Mean Score of the Problem Domain

Item	Indicator
Q1	Fear of speaking in public
Q2	Vocabulary limitation
Q3	Grammatical confusion
Q4	Anxiety / fear of error
Q5	Limited practice opportunity

The Problem domain yielded a section mean of 2,95 (Moderate). Q4 ("Worried about making mistakes when speaking English) obtained the highest mean in this domain ($M = 3,43$), including that

performance anxiety related to error-making was the most salient self-reported problem. Q5 (“Rarely get opportunities to practice speaking”) received the lowest score in this domain (M = 2,23), suggesting that students did not primary attribute their difficulties to insufficient in-class practice time.

Table 3. Mean Score of Selected Items Related to Abilities Domain

Item	Indicator
Q13	Pronunciation accuracy
Q14	Oral sentence construction
Q15	Spontaneous / unscripted speech
Q17	Speaking confidence
Q19	Shyness/Social Anxiety

Among the Abilities items most relevant to speaking production, Q15 (“Can you speak English without reading from a text or script”) received the lowest mean across both tables (M = 2,47), indicating that spontaneous, unscripted oral production was the most significant proficiency gap. Q17 (“Feel confident when speaking English”) and Q19 (“Not shy about speaking in front of peers”) scored moderately at M = 3,30 and M =

3,13, revealing a persistent gap between students’ stated interest in speaking and their self-reported confidence in actual performance.

RQ 3: Student Wants and Their Alignment with Curricular Necessities

Student wants were identified through the Solution domain of the questionnaire (Q21 - Q25), which examined preferred instructional approaches, activity formats, and feedback mechanism. All five items in this domain scored in the high categories for each item.

Table 4. Mean Scores of the Solutions Domain

Item	Indicator
Q21	Conversational practice preference
Q22	Game-based learning preference
Q23	Teacher modelling preference
Q24	Collaborative / pair-group work preference
Q25	Feedback preference

Q23 (“Wants the teacher to model speaking before I try”) received the highest mean in this domain (M = 4,13), including that instructional scaffolding

through teacher in Q25 (M = 3,60) which stated that students want feedback from the teacher. The teacher interview corroborated these preferences, with the teacher recommending game-based activities (e.g. Quizizz, Kahoot), role play, and picture description as affective formats, and emphasizing the value of peer interaction and scaffolded feedback in speaking instruction.

To address the second dimensions of RQ 3, the student wants identified above were mapped against the curricular necessities established in section 4.1 (Priorities domain, Q6 - Q10) and the teacher identified target competencies reported in Section 4.3 of the teacher interview. Table 4 shows the alignment between each expressed wants and its corresponding necessities.

Table 5. Alignment of Student Wants with Curricular Necessities

Student Want (Solution)	Mean	Aligned Curricular Necessities (Priorities domain)	Mean / Source
Teacher modeling before speaking tasks (Q23)	4,13	Basic communicative competence, ability to describe things in English (teacher interview)	4,40 Teacher
		recommending of interactive digital tools. Conversation practice (Q21,	M -

Game-based speaking activities (Q22) 4,03

Confidence willingness to engagement speaking com inter

More conversation practice in class (Q21) 3,80

Ability to s conversations basic communic

Pair and group practice activities (Q24) 3,73

Collaborative or introduction communicat

Formative teacher feedback on speaking (Q25) 3,60

Academic speak presentations (of pronunciation (teacher

As shown in table 5, each five students wants correspond to at least one curricular necessities identified through the Priorities domain of the teacher interview. The highest-ranked want - teacher modeling (Q23) - aligned directly with the highest-ranked necessity. Speaking fluency (Q6, M = 4,13) as scaffolded demonstration was identified by the teacher as the primary mechanism for moving students from memorized expression to independent oral production. Game-based activities (Q22, M = 4,03) aligned with necessity for low-anxiety, collaborative communication. Teacher modeling before speaking tasks (Q23) aligned with the teacher's recommendation of interactive digital tools. Conversation practice (Q21, M =

3,80) aligned with the necessity for simple peer interaction and basic fluency. Pair and group work correspond to the collaborative communication necessities represented by Q7 (M = 4,13) and Q8 (M = 3,73). Formative feedback aligned with the academic speaking necessities.: The alignment was positive and convergent across both student self-report and teacher perspective data.

Discussion

The Tripartite Framework and the Lacks-as-bridge Position

The findings of this study reveal that Grade 7 students' speaking needs are not coherently understood not as three discrete categories but as a dynamic, interdependent chain which lacks function as the conceptual bridge connecting curricula necessities to student wants. This proposition extends the tripartite framework originally proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who distinguished necessities, lacks and wants, but did not theorize the relation mechanism through which these

three components interact. The present data suggest that the relationship is not systematic: wants are not free-standing preferences; they are responses to specific lacks, and their pedagogical value lies precisely in whether they are capable of remediating those lacks towards corresponding necessities.

The curricula necessities identified in RQ 1 - communicative fluency, descriptive competence, the ability to sustain simple peer conversations, and the capability to perform basic academic speaking tasks- are fully consistent with the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) Fase D Under Kurikulum Merdeka (Kemendikbudristek, 2022), which prioritize meaning-focused, communicative oral production over grammatical accuracy. This alignment between the learner-derived necessity profile and the policy mandate confirms that the curriculum itself is not the source of the gap identified in this study. As Latifa et al. (2023) noted in their study if Kurikulum Merdeka implementation, the challenge for EFL teachers lies not in the policy framework, but in the translation of its communicative aspiration into

classroom realities that are responsive to individual learner profiles.

The Confidence-Motivation Paradox

A central finding of this study is what may be termed the confidence-motivation paradox: students demonstrated high motivation to speak English (Q6, M = 4,40) and positive affective orientations toward speaking activities, yet their lowest-rated ability was precisely the capacity to speak without relying on a text or script (Q15, M = 2,47), and their highest-rated problem was fear of making mistakes (Q4, M = 3,34). The teacher interview independently corroborates this pattern, with the teacher noting that students who appeared entirely reluctant in face-to-face classroom settings were able to demonstrate considerably greater oral ability when assessed through asynchronous video recording - a divergence that points to performance anxiety as the primary constraint, rather than underlying linguistic incapacity.

This pattern is consistent with Brown's (2001) observation that speaking in a

second language is inherently associated with affective vulnerability in formal classroom settings, and with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model, which posits that motivation does not translate directly into oral production when situational anxiety intervenes. More specifically, the data align with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which argues that heightened anxiety raises an internal barrier that suppresses communicative output even when the learner possesses sufficient underlying competence. Syahbani and Apoko (2023) documented precisely this dynamic in a Lower Indonesian secondary school context, finding a sign negative correlation between learning anxiety and speaking performance at the SMP level-finding that resonates closely with the pattern observed here. Lee and Chiu (2023) further demonstrated that communicative anxiety-both face-to-face and digital - constitutes a robust negative predictor of WTC among EFL learners, underscoring that the confidence-motivation paradox is not unique to his sample but reflects a well-documented structural feature of

EFL speaking development at the early secondary stage.

Wants as Targeted Response to Specific Lacks

Viewed through the lens of the lacks-as-bridge proposition, the students' highest-ranked wants - teacher modeling before speaking tasks and game-based speaking activities - are not merely incidental preferences; they represent targeted, functionally coherent responses to the specific lacks identified above. Teacher modeling addresses the spontaneous-speech lack (Q15) by providing a spoken example before production is required, thereby reducing the cognitive load in unscripted oral performance. Sarmiento-Campos et al. (2022), in a study of scaffolding effects on EFL speaking performance produces significantly more fluent and structurally complete output than those who did not - a finding that directly supports the functional logic of the students' preference for teacher modeling in this study.

Game-based and collaborative activities address the affective filter directly by embedding oral production within low-staked, non-evaluative formats; these activities lower the perceived risk of public error. A systematic review of game-based in EFL contexts by Susaniari et al. (2024) confirmed that game format reduce anxiety and foster collaborative engagement with particular pronunciation that students' express wants in the Solutions domain were not arbitrary but diagnostically informative.

This finding supports and refines the original Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposition that systematically identified wants serve as a vehicle for achieving necessities. However, the present data suggest an important qualification: the wants-necessities relationship is mediated by specific lacks they are designed to address. The want for teacher modeling connects to the necessity of communicative fluency not directly, but through the lack of spontaneous unscripted speech. The want for game-based activities connects to the necessities of peer interaction (Q8)

not directly, but through the affective lack of confidence under performance conditions. Removing the lacks layer from the analysis would render the wants-necessities alignment superficially plausible but mechanically opaque. Table 6 presents the summary of key findings and their connection to prior research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Two methodological limitations of this study warrant acknowledgement. First, the sample consisted of 31 Grade 7 students from a single school in Bukittinggi, West Sumatera, which limits the generalizability of the findings to Grade 7 EFL learners in other Indonesia regions or school types. Second, the study relied exclusively on students self-report data and teacher interview data, meaning that the Abilities domain scores reflects perceived rather than demonstrated competence. Future studies should replicate this investigation across multiple schools and districts, and triangulate self-report data with objective performance measures - such as holistic

scoring of recorded speaking samples using a validated rubric - to determine whether self-reported lacks correspond to objectively measurable proficiency gaps.

Two conceptual limitations also point towards productive directions for future research. The alignment between wants and necessities observed in this study was positive and convergent. However, this alignment may be context-specific to affectively-driven lacks, where the primary lacks is purely linguistic - such as vocabulary gaps or grammatical deficit - affective wants such as game-based activities may increase willingness to participate without directly resolving the underlying knowledge deficit. Future curriculum design research should therefore test whether the lacks-as-bridge proposition holds equally across both affective-driven and linguistic-driven lacks, or whether the mediating role of lacks varies by type of deficiency. Additionally, as this study was conducted within the early implementation phase of Kurikulum Merdeka, longitudinal follow-up studies tracking changes in speaking

needs across successive Grade 7 cohorts would provide valuable insights for curriculum monitoring at national level.

D. Conclusion

This study investigated the EFL speaking needs of Grade 7 students at SMPN 3 Bukittinggi using Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) tripartite framework. The findings revealed that curricular necessities under Kurikulum Merdeka prioritized communicative and meaning-focused oral production. The most significant lack was the inability to speak without a script (A15, M = 2, 47), compounded by fear of making mistakes (Q4, M = 3,43) - a pattern termed the confidence-motivation paradox. Students' highest-ranked wants, teacher modeling (Q23, M = 4,13) and game-based activities (Q22, M = 4,03), aligned positively with these necessities, which lacks functioning as the conceptual bridge between the two. These findings are limited to 31 students from a single school and should not be generalized without further verification across diverse settings. Future research is recommended to replicate the study across broader contexts, triangulate self-

report data with objective performance measures, and examine whether the lack-as-bridge proposition holds across both effective linguistic proficiency gaps.

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